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UNCLAS TAIPEI 003449

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -  
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DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SECRETARY POWELL'S BEIJING TRIP AND U.S. POLICY

A) "Have [Our] Rulers Really Tried Every Means to Stop War?"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" editorialized (11/2):

". U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's recent remarks have triggered a storm [in Taiwan], but they have also fully proven that `arms sales alone are not adequate to protect peace in Taiwan.' The focus of Powell's remarks was the denial of Taiwan's independent sovereignty and an emphasis on a `peaceful resolution' [to cross-Straight disputes]. He even misspoke or hinted about the `peaceful unification' of both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Powell's talks . mainly stick to the principle of maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait, and he warned the Taiwan authorities not to transgress the boundaries. For now, what can be certain is that no matter how Washington-Beijing-Taipei ties will develop in the future, the United States will not go to war with China for the Taiwan issue, and Taiwan (no matter whether it buys those weapons [from the United States] or not) cannot afford to resolve the cross-Straight disputes by means of war. China's missile threat [against the island] is a fact, but [Taiwan's] push for and provocative movements towards Taiwan independence is also a reality. The United States, however, is strongly opposed to any `unilateral attempt to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.' Under such a situation, the only factor that Taiwan can control is not to purposely cross the `red line.' The [Taiwan] government, however, is trying to solicit political support by occasionally `sneaking in' some movement to push for Taiwan independence but at the same time trying to engage in an arms race [with Beijing] by spending a huge amount of money buying weapons. Can such an attitude of making combat readiness, engaging in an arms race and even [taking] provocative movements help in the pursuit of peace for Taiwan? ."

B) "A Self-ruled Chinese Non-state"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said in an editorial (11/2):

". Taipei's reckless push for independence, defying repeated U.S. cautions and ignoring the basic rules of courtesy, prompted Powell's tough talk. Some critics have openly scolded Taipei for `biting the hand that feeds it.'

"The U.S. has come to the realization that separatism, if unchecked, is bound to spark a cross-strait war, disrupting regional peace and stability and dragging the reluctant U.S. into it.

"Washington also aims to influence Taiwan's December legislative election, reminding voters of the risk of supporting pro-independence candidates. When Powell stated that Taiwan was not a sovereign state, he was describing a historic fact. As a piece of Chinese territory, it was never a state. .

"The Powell episode suggests Taiwan's course for the future is limited.

"Like it or not, the U.S. message is loud and clear: `Taiwan can continue its self-rule as long as Beijing is not disturbed.'"

PAAL